TOWN OF BLUFFTON
PRESS RELEASE: CLEMSON INITAITIVE

The Town of Bluffton is joining a non-profit public/private economic development pilot project venture with Clemson University.

Called "Building the Technology Village," the three-year project is offered through the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development. Bluffton is the first of five such projects planned for non-metro areas across the state to commercialize technology and create new businesses.

The storefront technology incubator will be housed in occupant-ready space provided by CareCore National at the Buckwalter Place Tech Park. It will be community owned and will be operated by a non-profit entity established and supported by the Town and private investment.

The Open Center in Bluffton will be "a place that appreciates entrepreneurs and celebrates ideas for emerging technology companies," said Karl Kelly, Clemson director of commercialization and technology incubation.

The non-profit governing board of the center will include both private and public leaders, who will choose the participants. The Town of Bluffton will fund a consultant/employee for the center.

Mayor Sulka envisions the incubator as a place where "the region's underserved fledging entrepreneurs can find support so their ideas can be nurtured and grow into local and regional businesses."

The concept offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to join the incubator, where real-time distance learning is combined with hands-on consulting support provided by the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development. In addition to training and support from the university, entrepreneurs in the center will benefit from collaborating with one another as their business ideas develop.

Clemson resources available to participating entrepreneurs include information on protecting intellectual property, evaluating technology, locating product development services and seed financing, connecting with a business mentor, building corporate relationships and recruiting employees. The goal is to prepare entrepreneurs to leave the center and establish new businesses that enhance economic development and job creation in the community.

Don Ryan, chairman and CEO of CareCore National, offered the space for the program because he saw "a unique program that creates the opportunity for our region to demonstrate that new business can develop and grow in the Lowcountry. The fact that this center is tied to a major research university makes it a win-win for the entire area."

Bill Miles, longtime president of the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, sees the incubator project as "a very progressive step not only for Hilton Head Island and Bluffton but for the entire region including Savannah."

Paul M. (Mac) Horton, director of the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development, views the establishment of this first program in South Carolina as a "major step forward to create synergistic entrepreneurial economic development connectivity throughout the state."

The Buckwalter Tech Park Incubator is planned to be up and running by the end of the year.

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BUILDING THE TECHNOLOGY VILLAGE

Building the Technology Village is a hybrid internet-consultant program designed to support new technology company formation and development in non-metropolitan areas. The hybrid internet/store-front incubator program blends the attributes of real-time distance entrepreneurial learning with hands on consulting support. This program links communities to intellectual property, technology evaluation, product development services, seed financing, business mentorship, corporate relationships and recruiting. Web ware elements are provided through a diverse services and learning web-based network supplemented by support from a community coordinator and a Clemson staffed regional services center.

The program employs three fundamental elements including the storefront incubator, the Rural Entrepreneurial Development Center and the Technology Network. Major technology sectors include energy, life sciences, environmental sciences, water resources, defense, advanced materials and agricultural related discoveries representing core technologies of Clemson University.

- The storefront incubators are located in each community. These incubators are owned and staffed by the community (or local economic development agency). These storefront incubators assist in the early formation and funding of the emerging technology companies.

- The Regional Entrepreneurial Development Center (REDC) is housed at the Sandhill Research and Education Center in Columbia and staffed by commercialization professionals located within the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development. This center provides the training, resources and daily support for the community consultants and the companies. This center has virtual ties to technology, programs and resources across Clemson University.

- The Innovation Network is a web ware program designed by Clemson University providing programs for supporting community consultants and the emerging companies. This program provides access to state, university and federal programs and resources as well as an electronic library.

This program has the capability to reduce the cost of technology company incubation for mid-sized communities, engages the community in new company formation as a platform of the local economic development strategy and supports new job creation in high growth international markets in mid-sized non-metropolitan areas.